

AN ANALYSIS OF PREMONITIONS, DEPOSITED OVER ONE YEAR, FROM AN APPARENTLY GIFTED SUBJECT

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ABSTRACT

A woman who had previously exhibited an apparently unusual ability at foreknowledge of unexpected world and local events, posted all her premonitions, on 'reception', to the author throughout 1982. The 52 accounts were split between 2 judges who rated any correspondences between the premonitions and events reported in the press over the following 28 days—not only for the actual year but also for a different control year. The judges were unaware of which year applied to each premonition.

Using a non-parametric test it was found that, using rankings from both judges, an overall comparison between E and C data approached, but did not reach, statistical significance at the 5 per cent level ($z = 1.916$, $N = 51$, 2-tailed). Separate data from each judge did not attain statistical significance.

A few specific premonitions did appear to correspond very closely with later events, particularly one concerning an attack on the Pope. In addition, consistent latency periods (from premonition to event) noted in a previous paper on the Percipient were again demonstrated.

INTRODUCTION

Premonitions constitute a large proportion of anecdotal psi effects (L. Rhine¹ estimated 40 per cent in 1954), but the vogue for laboratory studies of precognition has meant that little research has been conducted into these real-life phenomena. Approaches in the past have included (a) the simple reporting of apparent cases^(e.g. 2), the full investigation of individual cases, involving statements from witnesses^(e.g. 3,4), and (b) the collection and collation of premonitions and other data in large-scale studies.^(e.g. 1,5,6) However, a major criticism that has always applied to studies of premonitions is that the material might have been selected preferentially from a much larger body, and that those cases could in fact be encompassed within the bounds of ordinary chance-expectation.

The purpose of this study was to overcome that cogent objection by obtaining prior premonition-reports from a gifted Subject, then determining their accuracy using a rating procedure and comparing those scores with a set of control data obtained in a pseudo-experiment. In a previous paper, the author has described the investigation of three apparently premonitory incidents concerning a female Subject.⁷ That same Subject readily agreed to take part in this new study.

METHOD

Subject: The Subject in this study was Mrs Barbara Garwell of Hull—a married woman in her 50s. Full details concerning her, including a 16PF personality assessment, are given in Hearne 1982.⁷ Barbara posted each premonition to the author, using pre-stamped envelopes, throughout 1982. The accounts were mostly posted within a day or two of the apparent premonition.

Technique: Apart from simple descriptive statistical analysis, the

premonition-reports were evaluated in the following manner. During 1985 two 'blind' judges, working independently and in isolation, rated each report on a 9-point scale. Each judge systematically inspected back-copies of the local newspaper (The Hull Daily Mail) in Hull Central reference library. The newspaper covers both local and international events, and has been a source of information for the Subject over many years.

The period of inspection into the future from the date of each premonition was set at 28 days, since the Subject stated that most of her successful premonitions have been fulfilled within that duration. The two judges were paid for their task by means of a grant generously provided by the SPR.

In order to determine whether or not the premonitions provided evidence for psi, the ratings for the actual year (1982) were compared statistically with those of a Control year (1981 for one judge, 1983 for the other judge). Each judge rated 6 months of each of the E and C years (judge 1: 1st and 3rd quarters, judge 2: 2nd and 4th quarters), in case an order-effect operated, so tending to produce a difference between judges' ratings.

Instructions to judges: (a) General. Your job is to compare premonition-accounts with newspaper items (up to 28 days ahead of the date of the premonition) and rate your confidence in the association between each premonition and later events on a scale (0-8). Half the premonition-accounts come from 1982, the other half from 1981 (or 1983). They have been mixed randomly, so any premonition account could be from either year. Each premonition will be compared with newspaper items from the two years.

(b) Details. Place in front of you those premonition-accounts corresponding to the date-limits stated on each account. Read each account several times. Read that day's newspaper and look carefully for any items that seem to reflect the premonition. If you come across such an item, rank it on a scale of 0 to 8. You will start at a date and move forward day by day. Note down on the paper attached to each premonition any story that seems to correspond with the premonition, and give the rank. Do this for each day. There may often be no items that seem to refer to the premonition. However, sometimes you may think that the premonition represents the later event symbolically (you have read the JSPR paper on the Subject's previous apparent premonitions). Take that into account in your judging.

N.B. The judges were led to believe that the premonitions were mixed and came from either of two years. This was to counter any preconceptions or biases concerning the ratings.

Rating scale: Correspondences: none (0), slight (1,2), fair (3,4), good (5,6), very good (7,8).

RESULTS

A. Descriptive Analysis

Fifty-two premonitions were sent to the author by the Subject over the year 1982. On one occasion 4 came from the same day, and on 4 occasions 2 shared the same day.

The 52 premonitions could be classified into the following types: Natural Events (5), Accidents (7), Warfare (4), Human-Mediated Situations (11), and Anxieties (25). (Table 1).

Table 1. Classification of Premonition-Reports from Subject in 1982

	<i>Frequencies</i>	
	<i>Dreams</i>	<i>Imagery</i>
A. NATURAL EVENTS		
a. Earthquake/volcano	2	0
b. Ship sinking	1	0
c. Death/illness of famous person	2	0
B. ACCIDENTS		
a. Plane crash	0	2
b. Fire	3	1
c. Submarine collision	0	1
C. WARFARE		
a. Naval confrontation	0	1
b. Land warfare	2	0
c. Civil war	1	0
D. HUMAN-MEDIATED SITUATIONS		
a. Murder	1	0
b. Bombs/terrorism	2	0
c. Fighting	1	0
d. Hostages/siege	1	0
e. Robbery	1	0
f. Soldiers searching	1	0
g. Assassination	2	1
h. Displacement of people	0	1
E. ANXIETIES (No events actually 'seen')		
a. Missing person	1	0
b. Children	2	0
c. Terrorism re. sport	1	0
d. Ship explosion	1	0
e. Prominent person	4	5
f. Vehicle accident	0	1
g. Non-famous person	0	4
h. Pot-holers missing	0	1
i. Warfare	0	1
j. Ship sinking	0	1
k. Local explosion	0	1
l. Escape in small boats	0	1
m. CO poisoning	1	0
	—	—
	30	22

B. Ratings Analysis

The highest rating of any correspondences noted between a premonition and news items over the following 28 days was taken as the premonition's datum. The ratings from each judge for the actual year (1982) and control year (1981/83) are displayed in Table 2.

Wilcoxon's matched pairs signed ranks test, for correlated samples, was employed in the statistical testing. An overall comparison using the data from

Table 2. Ratings of Accuracy of Premonitions for Actual Year (1982) and Control Years (1981/1983).

Judge 1			Judge 2		
	<i>E</i> 1982	<i>C</i> 1981		<i>E</i> 1982	<i>C</i> 1983
First Quarter			Second Quarter		
D	7	2	VI	8	0
D	2	0	VI	1	0
D	3	3	D	2	0
D	3	3	VI	0	0
D	0	4	D	0	0
D	0	2	D	0	0
D	1	0	VI	0	3
VI	6	0	VI	1	0
VI	1	3	VI	3	0
D	1	2	D	0	0
VI	2	2	VI	0	0
D	2	0	VI	0	0
D	2	2	D	0	0
Third Quarter			Fourth Quarter		
VI	1	1	D	0	0
D	3	2	D	0	0
VI	1	0	D	4	0
VI	2	0	D	1	0
VI	2	3	VI	4	0
VI	0	0	D	0	0
VI	0	0	D	0	0
VI	0	0	D	0	5
D	2	1	D	0	0
VI	5	0	D	0	0
D	0	2	D	0	0
VI	2	1	D	0	0
D	2	2	VI	0	0

(D = dream, VI = visual imagery).

both judges, between ratings for the actual and control year, provided a near significant result ($z = 1.916$, $N = 51^*$, 2-tailed), although separate comparisons for each judge were not significant (judge 1: $T = 119.5$, $N = 25^*$; judge 2: $z = 1.55$, $N = 26$). Each quarter's data was also analysed using the Wilcoxon test, but without any significant effects (1st: $T = 38.5$, $N = 13$; 2nd: $T = 21$, $N = 12^*$; 3rd: $T = 22.5$, $N = 12^*$; 4th: $T = 30$, $N = 12^*$).

* One pair of zero-differences removed because odd numbers present.

N.B. z = normal deviate.

C. Specific Cases

Three premonition-reports were rated as having a correspondence with a later event of 6 or higher on the scale of 0-8. All three received the ratings for the actual year (1982).

1. Rating: 8

Barbara had always previously posted any accounts of her premonitions to me, but on Monday 10th May 1982 she telephoned me saying that she had experienced a particularly strong premonition about something untoward which would happen to the Pope in the very near future. The premonition was of the visual imagery type, which from her previous reports I had noticed tended to be fulfilled in about 3 days rather than the 3 weeks associated with her dream premonitions. Barbara also sent the following written account of the premonition:

'As I got into bed, I closed my eyes and saw the outside of a castle. From the castle came about eight choir-boys or altar-boys. There were a lot of people together and much confusion. In the centre of these people I saw a figure in white. It was a person of State—e.g. the Pope.'

(11 p.m., 9th May 1982).

Three days later at the Fatima Shrine in Portugal, a man emerged from a crowd surrounding the Pope and attempted to stab him with a bayonet.

2. Rating: 7

'I had a vivid dream. Ron was sat at an old table reading a paper as if he had just picked it up. The headline was "Boat broke in two—sinking". There was a picture. It was coming to England. HMS Diddy? I felt that it was an old one—an oil tanker, as there were no portholes. It was sinking in the water. It seemed to be a Greek ship. Ron's mother said, "All the people said to me the water was boiling hot".'

(5 a.m., 21st January 1982).

On Saturday February 13th 1982, on the front page of the Hull Daily Mail, appeared a story about a Greek vessel, the 'Victory', which was sinking in the Atlantic. It was a tanker and was sailing from Florida to Liverpool. It split in two in a severe gale. I happened to be in the offices of a Sunday newspaper that morning and saw the news from the agency tapes. The crew had described the sea as 'boiling'. In fact the Sunday newspaper put an account of Barbara's apparent premonition on its front page, with a description of the vessel's sinking. Incidentally, 'diddy' is a word specifically associated with the city of Liverpool.

3. Rating: 6

'I got into bed and shut my eyes. I immediately got a clear picture, as if on a cinema screen. It was an island with whitish buildings. It seemed to move as if projected to me (the length of the island). It was not a big island. There was a huge stretch of what seemed to be bluish water in front of it. Then I saw lots and lots of war boats. It seemed to me as if they were facing each other for attack. They were definitely boats, not ships. Across the front of this screen was a whole length of foreign words that I could not understand. It was so real—like watching a TV screen. This was the clearest visual experience I have ever had.'

(11 p.m. 30th March 1982).

The Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands occurred suddenly and unexpectedly on April 2nd 1982, 3 days after this premonition. Throughout the

period of hostilities British TV sometimes showed Argentinian film of the war, and this was often accompanied by Spanish text on the screen—similar to Barbara's account.

Near-misses

There were some near-misses in the premonitions, which were not ranked because they fell outside the pre-determined latency period of 28 days. One was an anxiety for a large group of children in a vehicle of transportation. Seven weeks later a front page headline in the *Hull Daily Mail* reported a coach crash in France, in which it was stated that 48 children had died. Another premonition told of the death of Mrs Gandhi. That event did not take place until 2 years later.

DISCUSSION

The study has shown that, within the 28 days latency period observed, most of the premonition-reports from the Subject appeared to the judges *not* to refer to later events; however some slight precognitive effect may have been operating, resulting in the approach to statistical significance in the overall comparison between E and C data. Nineteen of the 52 comparisons showed a higher rank for the actual year rather than the control year, while 8 showed the reverse. In a further 19 comparisons neither E nor C year produced a rank greater than 0, and in 6 cases the rankings were tied.

Some evidence for the psi hypothesis emerged from an inspection of the latency periods of the three best premonitions reported in the Results section of this paper. In a previous paper on the Percipient⁷ it was noticed that several of her most impressive dream-premonitions came to fulfilment 3 weeks later, while a 3-day period applied to her visual-imagery premonitions. In all three of these latest cases, the latency periods followed those previously observed patterns.

These consistencies are, of course, of great theoretical importance. It is necessary to determine whether similar effects are apparent in other percipients, and to try to establish why such effects should occur. In a materialist universe, they might indicate that the information travels backwards in time at a uniform velocity in the two different conditions of reception.

Were there any clues in the transcripts as to the actual year involved? It was essential that no indicators should appear in the premonitions, or that sequential effects should provide an idea to the judges (despite their expectation of material randomly mixed from both E and C years). The original written premonitions were typed out and no such clues were observed. More importantly, both judges stated afterwards that they had no idea that the transcripts were, in fact, from just one year. It is probably acceptable to assume that these considerations did not contribute to the near-significant result.

The problem exists of separating out the apparently true premonitions from the bulk of seemingly false ones. One possible criterion might be the topic. These and previously investigated cases from Barbara suggest that the areas of assassination, ship disasters, and warfare provide perhaps the most accurate themes.

Another measure that may be important is the amount of conviction in the Subject that an event will happen. Barbara had an overwhelming feeling about

the attack on the Pope—a feeling so strong that she decided to telephone me urgently, before sending her written report.

A further study is underway with this Subject. The experimenter intends to separate out those premonitions on previously successful themes and of high conviction, and send them to a third person (before fulfilment). Hopefully, this might demonstrate a better statistical effect.

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